

*(The Case of Robert J. Oppenheimer)*

## Drama About Oppenheimer Case Is Staged in Berlin and Munich

By JEAN-PIERRE LENOIR

Special to The New York Times

MUNICH, Nov. 2—For the second time in two years, Germany has produced a play that may become the talking point of the season whenever it is produced.

The immediate success of Einar Kipphardt's new play, "In Der Sache J. Robert Oppenheimer," (The Case of J. Robert Oppenheimer) in Berlin, coming while "The Deputy" is still stirring world-wide interest and controversy, has produced assertions of a renaissance in German drama.

In Munich, where the play had its premiere on the same day, the talk has been less heady, but the conclusion is the same.

As with Rolf Hochhuth's play, people will probably argue more about what Mr. Kipphardt says rather than how he says it. Dramatically, both plays are standard-construction, multi-scene montages using dialogue that is taken for the most part from documentary sources. In the Kipphardt play, these sources include the 3,000 pages of typescript produced by the Washington committee that examined the security charges against Dr. Oppenheimer in 1954.

To this mass of material, Mr. Kipphardt has added an occasional quotation from the writings and verbal statements of his characters—all of them real-life actors in the drama that stirred world opinion 10 years ago.

### Films Are Inserted

Mr. Kipphardt has used more stagecraft and imagination than Mr. Hochhuth, and although the content of the play is limited to the actual security hearings, he has incorporated a large amount of filmed material and inserted flashbacks that break up and relieve the tedium of three hours of courtroom exchanges.

The play opens with film sequences of atomic explosions taken during test count-downs (in Berlin, the numerals are

given in English, then Russian and finally in French, presumably to avoid charges of anti-Americanism), scenes of the ruins of Nagasaki and other material that helps the spectator to visualize the world context of the case.

Mr. Kipphardt appears to have tried to avoid black-and-white characterization. Neither Dr. Oppenheimer nor anyone else is classified as hero or villain. Even Dr. Edward Teller, Dr. Oppenheimer's chief adversary at the time of the loyalty hearings, emerges as a sincere, if misguided, man. Dr. Oppenheimer himself is far from the archetype of selfless devotion to science.

Differences between the Munich and the Berlin productions are mostly due to the personal style of Erwin Piscator, who staged the Berlin version as a textbook example of political theater. In Berlin, the filmed material takes on a greater importance than in Munich.

### Actor Resembles Scientist

It is generally agreed among German critics who have seen both versions that the play is better cast in Munich. The physical resemblance between Peter Luehr, who plays the lead, and his real-life model is certainly striking and such characters as Dr. Hans Bethe and John Lansdale are remarkably interpreted.

But the greater potentialities of the Berlin house and the immense skill that Mr. Piscator wields when he is offered material worthy of his talents makes the Berlin production more impressive to watch.

"The Case of J. Robert Oppenheimer" had already been bought for production in more than 20 theaters in four countries before its simultaneous premieres. Jean Vilar is rehearsing the play for the Théâtre de l'Athénée in Paris and Giorgio Strehler will stage it in Milan next month. The play is Mr. Kipphardt's fifth.